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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 417th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 20 May 1992, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/49 (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN, summarizing the areas where it appeared that agreement had been reached in informal consultations, said that, while all delegations had expressed their support for the convening of the first stage of the United Nations Conference on the Indian Ocean at Colombo in 1993, they had also agreed that the participation and cooperation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean was essential for the success of the Conference. Since three permanent members of the Security Council and some major maritime users had indicated that they would not be able to participate in the Conference based on the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, which in their view had been overtaken by the positive developments in international political relations, the members of the Committee had considered that the Conference could not be held in 1993 in accordance with resolution 46/49.

2. Secondly, the members of the Committee had agreed that work on the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean should continue and that a new approach to the achievement of that goal was necessary. They had further agreed that that new approach should be defined in consultation with the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and had accordingly agreed to invite those delegations to participate in the work towards the achievement of the goal of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean. The members of the Committee had felt that the Chairman should continue to conduct consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and should report back to the Committee on their positions with regard to the new approach.

3. Thirdly, the members of the Committee had been of the view that a formal meeting of the Committee should be held during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to consider any draft resolution the Committee might wish to submit to the General Assembly.

4. Mr. JAIN (India) said that he would have some alternative wording to propose when the Committee came to establish the final wording of its conclusions, and he wondered whether a drafting committee should be set up for that purpose. He also requested the views of the Secretariat on the feasibility of the Committee holding a formal meeting during the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

5. Mr. KHERADI (Senior Adviser) said that there had been occasions in the past when the Ad Hoc Committee had found itself short of time to complete its work and had requested facilities for further meetings. Whether such further meetings would be possible during the forty-seventh session of the General

Assembly was currently under examination by the Planning and Meetings Servicing Section, and he hoped to be able to give the Ad Hoc Committee a firm answer the following day.

6. Mr. JAIN (India) said that when the Committee came to decide on the final wording in its report of its conclusion that the work of the Committee should continue, it should state that that work should continue in accordance with the 1971 Declaration. If, however, it was agreed that a new approach was desirable, then his delegation would join that consensus and the Committee's report should state that the General Assembly might wish to consider a new approach.

7. The view had been expressed that an appeal should be addressed to the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean to participate once again in the work of the Committee. On the other hand, the contrary view had also been expressed, namely that those delegations which had left of their own accord should return of their own accord. Since paragraph 8 of resolution 46/49 called for the full and active participation in the Conference of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, he felt that it would be preferable to stress that paragraph rather than to make an appeal.

8. Mr. HASSAN (Sudan) agreed that the Chairman's summation reflected the content of the informal consultations. He felt, however, that one point should be clarified, namely the mandate under which the Committee might continue its work. He did not know, for instance, whether the existing mandate would be renewed or extended. It was regrettable that at the current meeting the Committee had to concern itself with questions relating to its own mandate, rather than with constructive work towards the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

9. The Committee was at an impasse. It had to admit the reality that it was unable to make any progress without the cooperation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean. That was a negative consequence of the new world order. While he was well aware that the international situation was no longer the same as it had been in 1971, he felt that there was no guarantee that it would not change again. The essence of the 1971 Declaration remained valid, and should be given concrete form.

10. The Committee should prepare a report to the General Assembly, but it should not prepare a draft resolution for the General Assembly's consideration. Since he did not see how the Ad Hoc Committee could continue its work without referring to the 1971 Declaration and without the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, he felt that the General Assembly should decide whether the Ad Hoc Committee was to continue at all.

11. Mr. JAIN (India) said that his delegation continued to believe that the General Assembly and the Ad Hoc Committee should endeavour to implement the 1971 Declaration. However, since some of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean had indicated that they would not take part in the Conference because they believed that the Declaration was no longer relevant, many members of the Committee had expressed the view that a new approach should be found. In a spirit of constructive compromise, his delegation was prepared to support that view. However, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee did not permit it to decide whether or not a new approach was necessary; that decision should be left to the General Assembly.

12. Mr. AMBEYI-LIGABO (Kenya) said that the new approach should appeal to the delegations that had withdrawn from the Ad Hoc Committee. The main principles of the 1971 Declaration were no longer relevant, and the Ad Hoc Committee should come up with new principles that reflected the sweeping global changes that had taken place.

13. Mr. MFULA (Zambia) said that his delegation believed that the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate allowed it to make recommendations to the First Committee and the General Assembly on the future work of the Committee.

14. Mr. CURE (Mauritius) said that whatever the Ad Hoc Committee decided to include in its report was bound to have an effect on the future of the Committee. Therefore, the Ad Hoc Committee as a whole should take part in the drafting of the report. If difficulties arose on some points, a small group could be established to deal with them.

15. Mr. MAHMOOD (Pakistan) said that the Ad Hoc Committee should appeal to the delegations that had left the Committee to return. With respect to the future work of the Ad Hoc Committee, it was within the Committee's mandate to recommend to the General Assembly that it renew the Committee's mandate.

16. Mr. JAIN (India) agreed with the representatives of Kenya and Zambia that it was within the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate to make any recommendations on which there was a consensus in the Committee.

17. Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka) said that, in the past, the Ad Hoc Committee had succeeded in convincing delegations that had left the Committee to return. The Committee should therefore consider making an appeal to such delegations to participate in its work.

18. There was broad agreement that the Ad Hoc Committee should not repudiate the 1971 Declaration. Although the cold war had ended, there were still threats to the security of the littoral and hinterland States, and there was still a need to establish the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

19. Mr. ZIMBA (Mozambique) said that the central issue was the non-participation in the Committee's work of some of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean and the permanent members of the Security Council. The Committee should be flexible in seeking ways to bring them back, and his delegation was open to any recommendations. It supported making an appeal to former members, as well as an expansion of the Committee's mandate.

20. It seemed doubtful that the Committee could complete consideration of its report to the General Assembly in the time remaining. He was therefore in favour of requesting an additional meeting later in the year.

21. Mr. MUTHANA (Yemen) said that his delegation supported the Chairman's summation. It was in the interests of the Committee to implement the 1971 Declaration. That could be achieved through recognition that the world situation had changed and that all interested parties must participate. His delegation would support an appeal by the General Assembly to former Committee members.

22. Mr. SHA Zukang (China) said that he was in full agreement with the Chairman's summation. His delegation believed that recommendations should be included in the report. Although their content could be discussed further, he suggested two possibilities: first, an appeal should be made to those permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users which were not participating in the deliberations to rejoin the efforts to establish a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean; and second, since the former members of the Committee held a different opinion on the 1971 Declaration from that held by current members, the views of participating member States should be stated clearly. The changes in the world situation which had occurred since 1971, in particular in recent years, should also be mentioned. The representative of the Russian Federation had spoken of a balance of interests, but that was just part of the issue; there was also a balance of responsibility between States in the region and States outside the region with regard to the establishment of a zone of peace.

23. Mr. NAIMI-ARFA (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that he saw no major obstacle to the completion of the Committee's report before the end of the current session and that the Committee should not avoid that important task.

24. Mr. MAHMOOD (Pakistan) endorsed the suggestions of the representative of China regarding the recommendations to be included in the report. When discussing the balance of interests, attention should be drawn to the 1979 Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States of the Indian Ocean because at that Meeting the obligations of States within the region had been established and the limits of the zone of peace had been defined.

25. Mr. NEUHAUS (Australia) said that his delegation supported the suggestions made by the representative of China. There was already a sense of encouragement among former members about the movement within the Committee, which would bear fruit by the next session of the General Assembly.

26. Mr. AL-BATTASHI (Oman) said that his Government had supported the establishment of a zone of peace, and still supported the 1971 Declaration as a valid document to be considered when decisions were taken. Developments in the world must also be considered, however, to provide a balanced view of the interests of all. If a consensus emerged that the Chairman should make an appeal to former members, his delegation was prepared to join it. At the same time, it believed that any change in the Committee's mandate should be discussed with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which had participated in the definition of its original mandate.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the sense of the Committee seemed to be that a number of elements for the report already existed. He would submit further suggestions in writing for its review.

28. Mr. JAIN (India) suggested that the report should follow the standard format employed in previous years.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.